



**POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR THE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INDEPENDENT
SCHOOLS AND ASSESSMENT BODIES**

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ACRONYMS

GFET	General and Further Education and Training
GFETQF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NOF	National Qualifications Framework
QC	Quality Council
SASA	South African Schools Act

CHAPTER 1

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS, SCOPE, PURPOSE AND APPLICATION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Definitions

In this document, any word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) and the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (Act No. 58 of 2001), has the same meaning, unless the context otherwise indicates:

“accreditation” means the accreditation by the Council in terms of the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001, as amended in 2008;

“assessment” means the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about a learner’s achievement in order to-

- (a) assist the learner’s development and improve the process of learning and teaching; and
- (b) evaluate and certify competence in order to ensure qualification credibility;

‘assessment body’ means a department of education or a juristic body accredited by the Council as a body responsible for conducting internal assessment and external examinations;

“certification” means the formal recognition of a qualification or unit of learning awarded to a successful learner;

“Council” refers to Umalusi, the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training; as contemplated in the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 and the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001, as amended.

“curriculum” means the necessary underpinning framework documentation provided for a qualification to facilitate a more general understanding of its implementation in an educational system. The curriculum for a qualification provides a more detailed description of what is required for the purpose of the qualification to be fulfilled through its

enactment. Syllabi for the necessary units of learning/subjects form an integral part of the curriculum;

“exit point” means a point in general and further education and training at which a learner is required to demonstrate competence with a view to obtaining documentary proof of proficiency.

“external assessment” means any assessment conducted by an assessment body, the outcomes of which count towards the achievement of a qualification.

“further education and training ” means all learning and training programmes leading to qualifications from levels 2-4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which levels are above general education and training but below higher education.

“general education and training” means all learning and training programmes leading to a qualification on level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework, which level is below further education and training;

“General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework” means the sub-framework of qualifications developed and managed by Umalusi Quality Council for NQF levels 1-4 as envisioned in Chapter 2 of the NQF Act no 67 of 2008;

“GENFETQA Act” means the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act no 58 of 2001;

“independent school” means any privately owned school established in terms of the SASA, 1996;

“intended curriculum” means the description of the skills and content and values to be taught and learned, how these are to be enacted in practice, and how they should be examined or assessed;

“learning programme” means a structured and purposeful set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification or part qualification. The nature of the programme will be determined by the qualification and curriculum that it serves. Learning programmes, while serving the ends of the qualification, do not form a part of the qualification itself.

“Minister” means the Minister of Basic Education;

“National Qualification Framework” (NQF) is a ten-level framework provided for the registration of national qualifications;

“NQF Act” means the National Qualification Framework Act No 67 of 2008

“qualification” means a registered national qualification, in the context of the NQF Act no 67 of 2008;

“quality assurance” means the process of measuring quality against standards;

“Quality Council (QC)” means a Quality Council contemplated in Chapter 5 of the NQF Act no 67 of 2008;

“registered” means registered on the NQF by SAQA in terms of Chapter 4 of the NQF Act no 67 of 2008;

“requirements” mean requirements as outlined in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Grades R-12 / the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Grades R-12 and requirements established by this policy as determined by Council in respect of the quality assurance of independent schools, assessment bodies and assessment agencies;

Purpose of the policy

1. The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act No. 58 of 2001, as amended in 2008, provides for Umalusi to:

a) Develop policy and criteria for the quality assurance of private education institutions; including independent schools.

b) Develop policy for the accreditation of assessment bodies other than departments of education and must submit it to the Minister for approval.

This policy is also about the accreditation of private assessment bodies and the monitoring of private and public assessment bodies in accordance with a set of regulated accreditation criteria.

2. Accordingly, this policy is intended to serve as a framework for the quality assurance of independent schools and the accreditation and monitoring of private and public assessment bodies.

Application of the policy

This policy applies to:

3. Independent schools which are registered in accordance with the South African Schools Act (SASA), No 84 of 1996 and offer qualifications which are registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework (GFETQF).

Currently, Umalusi quality assures and issues the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and the Senior Certificate (SC). This policy is therefore in respect of:

- a) Primary and high schools which offer teaching and learning in accordance with the National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12 or the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS); and
 - b) Primary and High schools which conduct assessment in accordance with the National Protocol on Assessment (Grades R-12).
 - c) High schools which prepare their learners to satisfy all the curriculum and exit assessment requirements of the NSC and the SC.
4. This policy excludes education institutions which offer a foreign or alternative curriculum. Umalusi considers alternative or foreign curricula to be any curriculum that is not approved as policy by the Minister of Basic Education or any curriculum that does not comply in all respects with the requirement outlined in the National Protocol on Assessments, Grades R-12.
 5. Public and private assessment bodies that conduct and manage formal internal and external assessment in accordance with the regulatory framework outlined in the *National protocol on assessment for school in the General and Further Education and Training Band* (Grades R-12).

CHAPTER 2

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

6. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) and the South African Schools Act (SASA) (No. 84 of 1996) provide for the establishment of independent schools and public schools. Independent schools are required to register with the relevant provincial department of education.
7. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act No. 67 of 2008, provides for the establishment of Umalusi as a Quality Council that is responsible for the development and management of a sub-framework of qualifications at levels 1-4 of the National Qualifications Framework and the related quality assurance processes. The NQF Act No. 67 of 2008 determines that the Quality Council must, in respect of quality assurance within its sub-framework, do the following:
 - a) develop and implement policy for quality assurance;
 - b) ensure the integrity and credibility of quality assurance;
 - c) ensure that quality assurance as is necessary for the sub-framework is undertaken;
8. The *General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (No 58 of 2001)*, as amended in 2008, assigns responsibility for the quality assurance of independent schools to Umalusi (Chapter 3, 23 (2)(a)). In line with the object of the GENFETQA Act, namely, to enhance the quality of general and further education and training, Umalusi was established with the purpose of maintaining norms and standards in general and further education and training and as such its mandate is confirmed as follows:
 - a) Developing and maintaining a sub-framework of qualifications for general and further education and training;
 - b) Quality assurance of all exit point assessment of such qualifications
 - c) Certification of learner achievements;
 - d) Quality assurance of independent schools;
 - e) Accreditation of private assessment bodies
9. This policy must be read and understood in conjunction with the following policy documents:

- a) The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework 2011
- b) Standard Setting and Quality Assurance of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework: Umalusi, 2011
- c) Policy documents and guidelines pertaining to the National Senior Certificate and the National Curriculum Statements; and any other qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework as applicable;
- d) Other related legislation as appropriate to the various education and training sectors Umalusi is mandated to work in
- e) Council policies and directives on the conduct, administration and management of the assessments for the qualifications on The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework
- f) The regulations pertaining to qualifications on The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework that are developed by the Department of Basic Education and gazetted by the Minister on assessment and certification including those that are promulgated by provincial legislatures: and
- g) Any other relevant policies and directives issued by the Council

CHAPTER 3

THE QUALITY ASSURANCE APPROACH ADOPTED BY UMALUSI

10. Furtherance to the fulfillment of its legislative mandate, Umalusi sets standards for General and Further Education and Training through the development and quality assurance of qualifications, and their related curricula, as well as through the quality assurance of assessments at exit points. Quality assurance further includes the recognition through accreditation of independent schools and private assessment bodies to offer / assess qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training sub-framework of qualifications, against a regulated set of standards.

11. To determine and maintain the standard of qualifications in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, Umalusi must ensure the following:
- a) the associated qualifications and curricula are quality assured;
 - b) education institutions that offer provision towards the achievement of such qualifications are quality assured;
 - c) assessment bodies and systems that externally examine such qualifications are accredited, monitored and quality assured; and
 - d) the conduct of national external examinations for qualifications on the framework is moderated and monitored

12. The accreditation of independent schools includes the following:

- (a) Self-evaluation by the institution to develop and enhance an internal culture of quality management and ongoing improvement;
- (b) External validation to affirm meeting of accreditation criteria, national policy and regulations, and to ensure a benchmarked standard of provision; and
- (c) Monitoring to ensure maintenance of standards and continued improvement.

CHAPTER 4

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND THE REGISTRATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AS EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND AS EXAMINATION CENTRES

13. Umalusi is required to quality assure private education institutions in accordance with the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act, 2011, as amended in 2008. This mandate includes independent schools which offer a qualification that is registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework (GFETQF).

14. Independent schools which offer the National Senior Certificate must be accredited with Umalusi before they are registered as

examination centres with the relevant public or accredited private assessment bodies. The registration status of independent schools as examination centres is determined by the accreditation status with Umalusi and the requirements of the assessment body which is either the provincial department of education or a private assessment body accredited by Umalusi.

15. Umalusi and provincial departments of education must ensure the alignment of quality assurance processes and the registration of independent schools in order to avoid duplication of roles and to ensure that roles are sufficiently complementary. To that end,:

- a) Registration and accreditation requirements must be adequately aligned;
- b) Umalusi must recommend independent schools to the registrar of a provincial department of education for registration in order to ensure that the quality requirements for provisional registration are met.
- c) Umalusi will accredit provisionally registered independent schools;
- d) It is expected that provincial departments of education will grant full registration status to independent schools which are accredited by Umalusi;
- e) Umalusi must ensure that the registration status of independent schools is consistent with their accreditation status.

16. Umalusi and Provincial Departments of Education, must cooperate in dealing with unregistered and unaccredited independent schools.

17. Institutions offering the National Senior Certificate or Senior Certificate as a second chance to unsuccessful grade 12 learners must be accredited by Umalusi and registered by the Provincial Departments of Education as independent schools. These institutions must also be registered as examination centres with private and public assessment bodies.

18. Umalusi must accredit private assessment bodies in accordance with Chapter 2, Section 17A of the GENFETQA Act, 2001, as amended in 2008 and this policy.

CHAPTER 5

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION

19. Independent schools are required to register as examination centres with a public assessment body or an accredited private assessment body to examine the curriculum enacted at the sites of learning.
20. In an effort to ensure consistency in the national assessment system, Umalusi sets common criteria for public and private assessment bodies. Private assessment bodies are accredited, monitored and reported on at regular intervals and public assessment bodies, while not accredited are regularly monitored and reported on to ensure compliance with the same set of standards.
21. The accreditation of private assessment bodies includes:
 - a) Establishing “the need” for an assessment body to assess a qualification on the GFET sub-framework of qualifications in the national system before it is invited to apply for accreditation.
 - b) Application for accreditation supported by a self-evaluation report and evidence
 - c) Evaluation of the assessment systems and standards through a site visit
 - d) Ongoing monitoring to ensure credible, fair and valid internal and external assessment of learner achievement at exit points.
22. Accredited assessment bodies must register independent schools as examination centres and ensure that the requirements of the qualification being assessed are fulfilled.
23. Examination centres located in countries other than South Africa may be registered by the relevant assessment body on condition that:
 - a) They offer one of the qualifications registered on the GENFETQF;
 - b) They have an official permission from the education department in their country;
 - c) They are accredited by Umalusi and participate actively in the quality assurance regime of Umalusi.

CHAPTER 6

QUALIFICATIONS AND CURRICULUM

24. In accordance with the object of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008, Umalusi's quality assurance work is limited to qualifications for general and further education and training which are registered on its sub-framework of qualifications at levels 1-4 of the National Qualifications Framework.
25. Umalusi uses qualifications and their related curricula as key levers of its quality in the education and training system. It is Umalusi's view that standards are inherent in qualifications and their related curricula and that the standard is embedded in the type and extent of knowledge, skills and competence that the learner is expected to acquire through a predetermined learning process.
26. Umalusi accredits independent schools and assessment bodies to offer and assess the National Senior Certificate (NSC) which it certifies. Umalusi Council also quality assures and approves the related National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12. The NSC is a qualification registered on level 4 of the NQF, and is on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework .
27. In the main, the criteria for the accreditation of independent schools are intended to assess, inter alia the effectiveness of the implementation of the curriculum and in the case of assessment bodies the standard of the assessed curriculum and the credibility of the examination.
28. Umalusi's quality assurance scope excludes foreign qualification and curricula as well as the accreditation of independent schools that offer such qualifications and private assessment bodies that assess such qualifications.
29. In accordance with the constitutional right of private education institutions to conduct educational activities, and furtherance to the general development of the GFETQF, as contemplated by the NQF Act, 2008, Umalusi may consider qualification variants for registration on the GFETQF providing a "need" has been identified. Once registered on the GFETQF, such qualification variants are will be subject to Umalusi's quality assurance regime which is for the cost of the proposer.

Umalusi may consider the registration of qualification variants. However,

- a) The registration of qualification variants on the GFETQF do not apply to foreign qualifications;
- b) Umalusi only considers the registration of qualification variants which are examined through a national external assessment administered by an accredited private assessment body or the state;
- c) The proposed qualification variant and curriculum must meet the minimum standard set by the Minister of Education.

CHAPTER 7

ACCREDITATION PROCESS AND FUNDING

30. Accreditation is granted to independent schools and assessment bodies that comply in all respects with a policy determined by the Minister of Basic Education. Compliance is determined through a desktop evaluation of a self evaluation report with supporting evidence followed up with a verification site visit.

31. The accreditation process is divided into two phases, namely:

a) Provisional accreditation.

Provisional accreditation may be granted to independent schools which are found to comply in most respects with the regulated accreditation criteria. The schools' compliance with the regulated accreditation criteria will be determined through a desktop evaluation process. Independent schools that are granted provisional accreditation are required to address areas of partial compliance within a period not exceeding **two years**.

b) Full accreditation.

The full accreditation status is granted to independent schools which are found to comply in all respects with all the regulated accreditation criteria. The school's compliance will be determined through desktop evaluation and site verification processes conducted by Umalusi. Compliant independent

schools are accredited for a period of 7 years and are subject to post accreditation monitoring and evaluation by Umalusi Council.

32. In the case of private assessment bodies accreditation is granted for an unlimited period and closely monitored to ensure improvement and maintenance of standards.
33. Provisional accreditation may be granted for **three years** during which time the assessment body must meet all the requirements of accreditation. If the assessment body fails to meet this requirement it may not continue to offer national examinations for qualifications on the GFETQF.
34. Provisional accreditation of an independent school or private assessment body may not be extended unless Umalusi Council decides to do so under exceptional circumstances.
35. Accreditation decisions in respect of independent schools and private assessment bodies are made by Umalusi Council, through an Accreditation Committee established for this purpose.
36. A register of accredited independent schools and private assessment bodies is published by Umalusi.
37. In line with the letter and spirit of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000, the Council's accreditation decisions follow due process. To that end, the Council must set up a committee to deal with the appeals process.
38. Chapter 2, 13:8c of the GENFETQA Act, 2001 (as amended) makes provision for funds received by the Council in respect of fees charged for services. Accordingly, Umalusi determines annual quality assurance fees for all its services including accreditation and related processes.

CHAPTER 8

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF HOME BASED EDUCATION

39. The South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996 (as amended), provides for the registration of learners to be educated at home.

40. The notion of home based education is not consistent with Umalusi's approach to the quality assurance of education institutions. However, Umalusi may accredit an assessment body to administer or manage assessments conducted as part of the home based education system.

CHAPTER 9

WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION

41. Umalusi reserves the right to withdraw the accreditation status of independent schools or private assessment bodies that fail to comply with its accreditation and monitoring requirements. Such decisions may be appealed through a formal appeals process established and overseen by the Appeals Committee of Umalusi Council.

CHAPTER 10

CRITERIA FOR THE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

42. The set of criteria for the accreditation of independent schools constitutes the minimum standard that they are expected to comply with. The standard is evaluated in three inter-related areas, namely:
- a) Input:
The criteria focus on the standard of input factors which include management and leadership, resources and all other enablers of a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning.
 - b) Process factors
The accreditation criteria are used to assess the effectiveness of internal quality management and standards of curriculum implementation and assessment as well as any other processes

that are intended to lead to the achievement of the school's stated goals.

c) Output

The accreditation criteria are focused on the quality of assessment outcomes or results as well as other indicators of success.

43. The set of criteria for the accreditation of independent schools is as follows:

a) **Criterion 1: Leadership, management and communication**

The school's leadership provides strategic direction and governance oversight based on acceptable practices. Management strategies, approaches, policies and processes are effective in facilitating the achievement of the school's stated objectives and national objectives, and in raising school performance. The school leadership and management consult and communicate effectively with all stakeholders in respect of strategic and management related matters.

b) **Criterion 2: School ethos**

The school gives expression to an ethos that promotes the values of the South African Constitution and displays values that reflect the specific character of the school, as articulated in the school's vision and mission statement, with specific attention to safety and discipline;

c) **Criterion 3 : Teaching and learning**

The school designs and delivers learning programmes and assessments for the qualifications it offers in accordance with the policy requirements of the qualifications as registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework and provides appropriate support for learning. The school conducts and takes responsibility for the standard of internal continuous assessment, and where appropriate is registered as an examination centre that undertakes external assessment in compliance with the directives of the national policy that governs the qualification, policies and directives of Umalusi Council and the relevant assessment body. The quality of the school's teaching and learning, and assessment is effectively monitored for improvement.

d) **Criterion 4: School Results**

School performance is evaluated and used to inform continuous improvement in the quality of provision with specific reference to the quality of learner achievements and assessment outcomes, and stakeholder satisfaction levels.

CHAPTER 11

CRITERIA FOR THE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ASSESSMENT BODIES

44. The GENFETQA Act, 2001 (as amended), does not provide for the accreditation of public assessment bodies. However, Umalusi is required to quality assure exit assessment. As public assessment bodies administer exit assessments, they are monitored by Umalusi through a set of criteria outlined in this document.
45. Accreditation is granted to private assessment bodies where such organizations satisfy the requirements for accreditation as indicated in this policy and the supporting policies and directives as established by the Council.
46. The public assessment system is monitored and reported on against the criteria of this policy.
47. The quality assurance and monitoring of assessment systems are central to the quality assurance of national external examinations which are important in determining standards in public and private education and training.
48. Several broad criteria pertinent to the quality assurance of assessment bodies are grouped into three focus areas: strategic leadership and management; assessment standards; and, the administration of assessment.
49. The set of criteria for the accreditation of private assessment bodies and the monitoring of public assessment bodies is outlined as follows:
 - a) **Criterion 1: Leadership, planning and management**

The assessment body's leadership provides strategic direction and governance oversight based on acceptable practices. The strategic initiatives, interventions, policies and procedures of the

assessment body promote fair, valid and reliable assessments. The assessment body is financially viable and sustainable and demonstrates commitment to quality improvement.

b) Criterion 2: Assessment standards

The assessment body's assessment approach and systems are credible in that assessments are administered against the policy requirements and standards of qualifications and curricula registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework. Assessment standards and practices are benchmarked and quality assured. Standards of assessment are maintained and improved through appropriate and effective monitoring and moderating mechanisms.

c) Criterion 3 : Development and research

The work of the assessment body is informed by appropriate research and assessment approaches are innovative, benchmarked and fit for purpose. Research findings are used to improve assessment products, systems and approaches as well as to provide feedback to education institutions in order to drive the improvement of teaching, learning and internal assessment. The capacity of staff employed in the assessment process is developed.

d) Criterion 4: The conduct and administration of examinations and/or assessments

The assessment body conducts credible external assessments /examinations in that it is effective and efficient in the management of all administrative and logistical processes associated with the conduct of examinations and/or assessments. Security systems with a low tolerance for irregularities are implemented and irregularities are reported and dealt with as required. Delivery is monitored and evaluated with the purpose of supporting continuous improvement.

e) Resulting systems and processes

The assessment body has efficient and reliable systems for the capture, storage and management of learner achievement data and is ethical in reporting and safeguarding the accuracy and security of learner results.

CHAPTER 12

TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

50. The Council will implement transitional measures, in order to manage the transition from current processes to the roll out of the full accreditation regime.
51. This policy will become operational on a date determined by the Minister of Basic Education in the relevant Government Gazette.